

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

unto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any Booke choose his Patroness, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so much were your L. L. likings of the severall parts, when they were acted, as before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We haue but collected them, and done an office to the dead; to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow aliue, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we haue iustly obserued, no man to come neere your L. L. but with a kind of religious addresse; it hath bin the height of our care, who are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But, there we must also craue our abilities to be considerd, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach forth milke, creame, fruites, or what they haue: and many Nations (we haue heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leauened Cake. It was no fault to approach their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remaines of your seruant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them, may be euer your L. L. the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the living, and the dead, as is

Your Lordshippes most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGE.
HENRY CONDELL.



To the great Variety of Readers.



From the most able, to him that can but speake you are number'd. We had rather you were Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends on your capacities: and not of your head, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique wil stand for your priuiledges we know: and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soeuer braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and not. Iudge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your fiftie shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates, and come. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue you, or make the lacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit, to arraigne Playes, know, these Playes haue had their triall already, and stood out of peales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of the law, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation.

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene witnessd, the Author him selfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and overseen his writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death parted from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the charge of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; as we haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the hands, and stealthes of iniurious impostors, that expos'd them: euen now are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes, and the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiu'd them. Who, as a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresse of it. His wit and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered without easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his writings. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and give you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there where your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and to you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. We leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can be your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and And such Readers we wish him.